

1 Real-life transformation

Art therapist Simon Woodward wrote on welldoing.org:

'The changes we see in nature during March can be some of the most dramatic of the year and can resonate deeply with our own fascination with transformation. From March onwards, wiggling tadpoles can be found tucked away in sheltered pools and ponds. This is the start of their 11-week transformation that will eventually see them emerge as new frogs. Look up into the trees and you will see neighbourhoods of noisy rooks starting their cacophonous breeding. The air is filled with promise; our senses are stirred as colour returns to the world.'

For many animals – including ourselves – March marks the end of hibernation. But often our emotional resources are frozen along with the aspects of ourselves we'd rather not look at. We may be frozen by our own guilt, shame or fear. March provides a timely reminder that the softest of shoots have the capacity to push through the hardest of rocks.

Transformation, in part, is about letting go of aspects of ourselves that hinder us and celebrating those facets that enhance our lives. Sometimes engaging with symbolic art-making can assist in manifesting change.



Find a small stream that resonates with you. Then, find a natural object that represents what you want to leave behind. Next, find or make an object that symbolises something you wish to take forward with you.

Standing on winter's bank (it may be the shady side), hold winter's object in one hand and spring's object in the other. Take a moment to imagine that you are actually holding the two parts of yourself

in the respective hand.

When you are ready, drop the winter object to the ground and traverse the stream carrying only your spring object. On reaching the sunny spring bank, cradle the positive object in both hands. Embodying your new self, keep this object safe – it is the promise to yourself to allow transformation in to your life.'

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2 MAKE YOUR BODY LANGUAGE STRONG

Our current political situation may be making you feel uncertain about the future, so this is a good time to click into some positive thinking. Or in this case, positive standing. According to Gill Hasson's Positive Thinking Pocketbook (Capstone, £8.99) the way you sit and stand can affect the way you feel. Adopt



two or three of these suggestions to make you feel more confident:

- stand or sit straight
- keep your head level
- relax your shoulders
- spread your weight evenly on both legs
- if sitting, keep your elbows on the arms of your chair.



3 What's new?

Spring is a great time to try out something new that you may never have even considered before. The world is new around you; opportunity seems as plump as the buds on trees, in the very lengthening of every evening.

Go online or browse in a library or bookshop. It could be something practical that learning would improve. Cooking lessons? Tennis coaching? Even agreeing with a friend or group of friends that you are going to visit an art exhibition/see a play/read a book every month or two. Or if you are on the look out for new friends, launch yourself into something where you will find them: evening classes, park runs, volunteer activities.

4

Don't forget to grab some Vitamin D

The sunshine vitamin is essential for healthy bones, teeth and muscles as it helps the body absorb calcium and phosphate from the food we eat. In the UK, we get most of our vitamin D from sunlight from around April to the beginning of October. Vitamin D deficiency can soften bones and is also implicated in increasing the risks of some forms of cancer.

But sitting in the sun brings its own risks, such as skin



cancer. To boost your Vitamin D, make your exposure for short periods, letting the sun kiss your sunscreen-free arms, hands or lower legs.

It's not known exactly how much time is needed in the sun to make enough vitamin D to meet the body's requirements. If you want to be sure you won't become Vitamin D-deficient, take a supplement or make sure you eat some of these items: oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, herring and sardines, red meat and eggs.

5

Friends, family, fun

'Spending time with our family and friends is ultra-healthy (both socially and mentally),' founder of PsychReg Dennis Relejo wrote on the welldoing.org site. 'But it's a bit of a hassle to pull on a coat, a scarf, gloves, and a pair of boots before going out, so you're more likely to be tempted to just stay in during the winter. And of course, one consequence of less socialising is that we engage in fewer physical activities in general: no more lunchtime walks or after-dinner strolls. Thankfully, spring gives us more daylight and warmth to encourage us



to be on the go. According to Peter Walschburger, Professor Emeritus of Biopsychology at the Freie Universität Berlin, 'Human beings are programmed to rest when it's dark and to be active and in high spirits when it's light'. As he explains, 'humans react massively to light'. That is why conscious experience and human behaviour change radically on fine spring days.

So take time out to admire the greenery and colours around you and experience the instant relaxation of your stressed mind. It's the season to feel fabulous and healthy.



6 FACING DOWN YOUR PHONE

Welldoing.org therapist Hilda Burke has a book out in June to help you develop a healthier relationship with your phone. In the meantime, four tips on digital detoxing:

- **Be honest:** assess what the behaviour you're detoxing is 'costing' you. What would your life be like if you could control your use of digital devices?
- **Motivate yourself:** focus on what you'll get from giving up. To change behaviour, we need to be motivated and for this we have to see a clear potential benefit.
- **Appoint a mentor:** Check in with them on a weekly basis or more often if you're struggling. Having to report to someone we respect and who wants the best for us can help as it makes us accountable.
- **Take note:** remind yourself how your life is improving. I notice that clients often take

the positive aspects of a change in behaviour for granted and it can quickly become the norm. Recognising our achievements reaffirms our positive behaviour, making lapsing back to the old way of being less appealing.

Do bear in mind that breaking habitual patterns of behaviour can be difficult to do alone. There is no shame in asking for help. In fact, it takes humility and maturity to take that step. A course of psychotherapy could be worth considering to help support you while you attempt to break your habit, whether that be digital addiction, smoking, or whatever it is that's unhelpful in your life.

The Phone Addiction Workbook: How to Identify Smartphone Dependency, Stop Compulsive Behavior and Develop a Healthy Relationship with Your Devices by Hilda Burke will be published in June.